steps have been taken to enhance the export growth which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralization, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. Special Economic Zones are being set up to further boost the exports.

New industrial policy for Northern Hilly States

2449. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal are also as hilly, backward and remote as the States of NE parts of the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that for NE States, there is separate industrial policy; and

(c) if so, whether Government propose to announce a separate industrial policy to Northern Hilly States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal on the lines of NE States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) (a) and (b) Considering relative geographical isolation of the North East region, distance from the main centres of trade and industry, inadequate physical infrastructure, smallness of the regional market and low accessibility to the market outside the region as well as prevalent extraordinary circumstances, a Special Package of incentives was notified by the Government on 24.12.1997 to stimulate industrial development in the region.

(c) Proposals have been received from the State of Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarnchal for a separate industrial policy. No proposal from State of Himachal Pradesh for a separate industrial policy has been received.

Smuggling of diamonds

2450. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item

captioned, "Rs. 324 cr. diamonds smuggled in through forged REP licences" which appeared in Hindustan Times dated the 16th June, 2001;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto and whether Government propose to unearth the nexus of interested persons and officials of DGFT; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. As a result of critical scrutiny of import documents including licences presented for clearances of rough diamonds in February, 2001 and detailed follow up investigations, Mumbai, Customs detected that four importing firms, namely M/s Deepali Exports, M/s Vijaybhav, M/s Pushpak Impex and M/s Vaibhav Exports had been indulging in tampering and forgery of import licences to get away with duty free imports of rough diamonds. Investigations have revealed that these firms have imported rough diamonds valued at Rs. 332 crores on the strength of 53 forged Replenishment Licences during the period January, 1999 to February, 2001. Rough Diamonds worth Rs. 5 crores have been seized and all the four Proprietors of the above said four firms have been arrested under the Customs Act, 1962.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Action against the four accused is underway under the Customs Act, 1962 and allied laws. No DGFT officials have been found involved in this case.

Admission of SC/ST students in Indian Diamond Institute

2451. VEN'BLE DHAMMAVIRIYO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government decided to admit the students from SC/ST community to the fullest extent of quota of seats reserved for this community in all the educational/academic institutions as recommended by Dr. Ambedkar Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee in the year 1993;

(b) if so, the action taken thereon and the total numbr of seats offered in different faculties/disciplines/courses in the Indian Diamond Institute during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the number of students from SC/ST community among them and percentage as compared to the total seats?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The Policy of the Central Government